

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 7-26 are pending in this application. Claim 6 is canceled by the present response without prejudice. Claims 16-26 are allowed. Claims 7-15 were objected to as dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were noted as allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of their base claims and any intervening claims. Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over WO 98/54538 to Mangolds in view of U.S. patent 4,154,012 to Miller.

Initially, applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication of the allowance of claims 16-26 and of the allowable subject matter in claims 7-15. With respect to the indication of the allowable subject matter in claims 7-15, applicants note that each of Claims 7 and 8 is amended by the present response to be rewritten in independent form, and each of claims 9-15 depends either directly or indirectly from one of now independent claims 7 and 8. Therefore, claims 7-15 are believed to be allowable.

The present response is submitted to place the above-identified application in condition for allowance with the allowable subject matter of claims 7-26, and thereby by the present response the only rejected claim, claim 6, is canceled without prejudice.

Application No. 09/672,898
Reply to Office Action of March 9, 2004.

In such ways, only allowable claims are believed to be pending in this application, and thus the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable disposition of the present application is hereby respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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